

**Empirical research to contextualise serious and organised crimes
and develop perspectives on effective crime control in the UK**

By

Michael Skidmore

PhD by Publication

**University of Portsmouth
Institute of Criminal Justice Studies**

August 2022

Contents

Abstract.....	P. 3
List of Tables.....	P. 4
Declaration	P. 5
Acknowledgments.....	P. 6
List of papers for this submission and statements on joint authorship	P. 7
1. The structure of the critical commentary.....	P. 9
2. Research philosophy and methodologies.....	P. 10
3. Research to understand the nature and impact of serious and organised crime ...	P. 13
3.1.Understanding serious and organised crime	P. 13
3.2.Understanding serious and organised fraud	P. 15
4. The effectiveness of crime control in serious and organised crime	P. 17
4.1. The effectiveness of crime control in fraud and online child sexual abuse	P. 17
4.2. Prevention strategies for serious and organised crime	P. 19
5. The key contributions to knowledge.....	P. 20
6. The significance and impact of the research	P. 25
7. Conclusion	P. 28
Reference list	P. 29

Abstract

This thesis draws together papers from four separate projects that cohere to make a significant contribution to knowledge on the nature and impact of serious and organised crime in the UK and relatedly, the nature and effectiveness of public policies, structures and resources for implementing crime control. Serious and organised crime is contested in criminology, the form that it takes dependent on which theoretical framework is adopted. I take a crime-oriented perspective to examine specific offence categories, including fraud, volume acquisitive crime, sexual abuse and exploitation. I integrate analyses of police and other administrative data, practitioner surveys and interviews, taking an interpretative approach to analysis. I produce empirical accounts that contextualise these crimes within the relevant community, market or technological settings, incorporating the experiences of victims and affected communities. Furthermore, I apply this evidence to critically discuss the approaches in law enforcement to constructing serious and organised crimes, and the ways in which these interact with, and guide discretion across policing. A key element of my research into fraud and online child sexual abuse has been to refract evidence on these crimes through the knowledge, resources and structures in law enforcement and the wider state to account for the effectiveness of crime control, incorporating criminal investigation, protective services and crime prevention. I collected evidence from within law enforcement to critically appraise effectiveness within the frame of harm reduction. I used this evidence to produce theorised accounts to explain deficiencies in strategic and operational law enforcement. Key overarching themes include workforce and technological capability; knowledge generation and approaches to rationalising discretion; the coordination of resources and interventions; and the positioning of law enforcement within the wider ecology of stakeholders, drawing from the principles of situational crime prevention.

List of tables

Table 1: The methodologies and key contributions from research projects included in this submission P. 10

Table 2: A summary of the key contributions to knowledge for each submitted paper P. 18

Table 3: Measure of research impact by publication P. 25

Acknowledgements

I am very thankful to the Dawes Trust which granted the funding for this PhD. And special thanks go to Dr Rick Muir at the Police Foundation who has been supportive and accommodating from application through to finish. My years at the Police Foundation have been invaluable in my professional development, and particular thanks go to Professor Martin Gill at Perpetuity Research for the time and energy invested to make me a better researcher and writer. And a final mention to my supervisor, Professor Mark Button, who has patiently guided and supported me through the process of preparing this submission.

Declaration

I have not been registered for any other research award while registered for a PhD by Publication at the University of Portsmouth. This thesis is the work of the named candidate and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Michael Skidmore

List of papers for this submission and statements on joint authorship

The Police Foundation is an independent organisation that completes research for the purpose of improving policing and developing knowledge and understanding of policing and crime reduction. I am the organisational lead for serious and organised crime and the papers included in this submission represent work taken from four substantive projects. Two were completed in collaboration with Perpetuity Research. My role at the Police Foundation has grown over time, initially managing discrete elements of a large-scale organised crime project, and since, taking the role of lead researcher and author. I manage research from beginning to end, lead on conceptual and methodological development, conduct fieldwork and data analysis, interpret and synthesise findings (including policy analysis) and write the reports. All published Police Foundation reports are edited and formatted by the publications teams. In the table below I describe my specific contribution to each paper.

1. Crocker, R., Garner, S., Skidmore, M., Webb, S., Graham, J., & Gill, M. (2017a) *The impact of organised crime in local communities*. The Police Foundation/Perpetuity Research.

I led the research in one of two sites, leading the research into fraud, exploitation in the off-street sex market and the effectiveness of local strategies and interventions. This included all aspects of data collection, analysis and drafting relevant chapters of the final report. As part of a larger team I supported the development of methodologies and analyses in the second site.

2. Crocker, R., Skidmore, M., Webb, S., Garner, S., Gill, M., & Graham, J. (2017b) Uncovering Organized Shoplifting and Theft Networks. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 13, Issue 4, 377–385.

I compiled and analysed data outputs from the main report and wrote this paper.

3. Skidmore, M., Garner, S., Desroches, C., & Saggu, N. (2017) The threat of exploitation in the adult sex market: A pilot study of online sex worker advertisements. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 210–218.

I designed the project and managed the processes of data collection and analysis. I compiled and interpreted the outputs and wrote the article.

4. Crocker, R., Webb, S., Skidmore, M., Garner, S., Gill, M., & Graham, J. (2018) *Tackling local organised crime groups: lessons from research in two UK cities*. Trends in Organized Crime, volume 22, 433–449.

I contributed to the analyses of outputs and supported the drafting process for this paper.

5. Skidmore, M., Crocker, R., Webb, S., Gill, M., Garner, S., & Graham, J. (2020a) Peeling back the layers of organised crime in local communities: Integrating data and analyses to strengthen the narrative. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*.

I compiled and analysed data outputs from the main report and wrote this paper.

6. Skidmore, M., Ramm, J., Goldstraw-White, J., Barrett, C., Barleaza, S., Muir, R., & Gill, M. (2018) *More than just a number: Improving the police response to victims of fraud*. The Police Foundation/Perpetuity Research.

I led this research supported by a team of researchers. I analysed the data and interpreted and integrated outputs to produce findings, supervised drafting by researchers, and drafted key chapters on the nature of fraud, the effectiveness of enforcement, and the systemic response from law enforcement. The process of editing and structuring the report and developing policy recommendations was supported by the director of the Police Foundation.

7. Skidmore, M., Goldstraw-White, J., & Gill, M. (2020b) Understanding the police response to fraud: the challenges in configuring a response to a low-priority crime on the rise. *Public Money & Management*, Volume 40, 2020 - Issue 5: Fraud and financial crime in the public.

I compiled and analysed data from Skidmore et al. (2018), completed new analyses and wrote this paper.

8. Skidmore, M., Goldstraw-White, J., & Gill, M. (2020c) Vulnerability as a driver of the police response to fraud. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 49-64.

I compiled and analysed data outputs from Skidmore et al. (2018), completed new analyses and wrote this paper.

9. Skidmore, M. (2020) *Protecting people's pensions: Understanding and preventing scams*. The Police Foundation.

I worked independently on this research. The process of editing and developing policy recommendations was supported by the project funder.

10. Skidmore, M., Aitkenhead, E., & Muir, R. (2022) *Turning the tide against online child sexual abuse*. The Police Foundation.

I led this research supported by a research assistant. I analysed the data, interpreted and integrated the findings and wrote the report. The process of editing and developing policy recommendations was supported by the director of the Police Foundation.

1. The structure of the critical commentary

The papers included in this submission encompass multiple criminological fields that are broadly offenders, harm and victimology and various categories of offence that include cyber and economic crime, volume acquisitive crime and sexual abuse and exploitation. Each offers a distinct perspective on crime within the ambit of serious and organised crime as constructed in public policies (HM Government, 2018). The themes in each paper diverge depending on the research questions and methodological emphasis for each project. Instead of a chronologically-ordered account of these papers, I took the decision to integrate discussion of each paper under key overriding themes, broadly to understand the nature and impact of serious and organised crime and the effectiveness of crime control.

In the next section (2) I will position my work within the wider theoretical landscape in criminology, and describe the underlying research philosophy that binds my work together. Extending from this, I will discuss and provide a summary of the methodologies used in each research project. In section 3 I discuss my contribution to understanding the nature and impact of serious and organised crime, broken down into two parts; first my contribution to understanding serious and organised crime, and second, serious and organised fraud. I include a separate discussion of fraud due to its prominence within my overall contribution. Section 4 that follows will then discuss my work to understand effectiveness of crime control in serious and organised crime. I begin with a discussion of my overall approach to examining effectiveness, giving specific findings in fraud and online child sexual abuse (CSA). I discuss separately my work to develop perspectives on crime prevention.

The remaining sections (5-7) are first, a table which lists each paper and summarises its significance and key contribution to knowledge, and then a more detailed discussion of the evidence to demonstrate the significance and impact of my research, followed by a final concluding section.

2. Research philosophy and methodologies

A number of influential academic researchers have argued that serious and organised crime is a construct, one for which definitions and public policies have changed over time to accord with the wider social and political context (Gill & Edwards, 2002; Hobbs & Antonopoulos, 2014; Paoli & Fijnaut, 2006). My research uses interpretive analyses to understand and appraise the knowledge and strategies of the state for managing the diverse offence categories encompassed by serious and organised crime. This permits critical analysis of data and knowledge that are intrinsically “theory-laden” (Bottoms, 2008). This includes notions of organisedness, seriousness and harm in different offending contexts and the complexity of offending and commensurate controls, that are used to represent serious and organised crime in public policies (Albrecht, 2008; Sergi, 2016). My research has focused on multiple offence-types including conflictual crimes such as fraud, and consensual crimes such as illegal forms of prostitution (Tusikov, 2011). The binding agent for the divergent themes is serious and organised crime as it is constructed in public policies, giving shape to the strategies and resources in law enforcement and other state agencies.

The objectives of my research are bound to those of the Police Foundation, a non-government organisation that conducts research with the aim to improve public policing in the UK. Therefore I am closely aligned to the traditions of administrative criminology, a field that typically conducts research from within or for government, emphasises empirical evidence over theory, and is more concerned with controlling crime than the underlying root causes of crime (Hough, 2014; Mayhew, 2016). The independence of the Police Foundation gives some latitude to represent the interests and perspectives of diverse stakeholders; for example, Skidmore (2020) compiled divergent evidence from public, private and third sector organisations. Furthermore the emphasis on interpretivism as a means to critically appraise crime-related problems and relevant policies sets the research apart from much administrative criminology in which positivist methods have predominated (Rock, 2017).

My research is empirical, focused to address the policy concerns of government and police, drawing together observed data to develop more general conclusions, whilst also taking a pragmatist approach by analysing data through a number of established theoretical frameworks (Crow & Semmens, 2007). This includes neo-classical theories that treat offenders as rational actors, and crimes as the product of measurable factors, both receptive to evidence-based interventions developed from ecological theoretical perspectives (for example, Cornish & Clarke, 1986; Cohen & Felson, 1979). My analyses are also guided by wider critical theory on the nature of crime, victimisation and the role of the state, especially in interpreting crime as demand for public service. This includes left realism theories that emphasise a contextualised understanding of crime, specifically social harm and the divergent experiences of victims and communities (Lea & Young, 1984; Walklate, 2015).

The epistemological principles of Interpretivism assert that our knowledge of the world is “constituted only through people’s experience of it”, and therefore knowledge requires a contextualised understanding of the research subjects and their perspective (Maruna, 2010. P. 126). It is less fixated on a standardised approach, with a requirement to adapt methodology to suit the subject being studied, emphasising a focus “on extracting the meaning of action, rather than simply calculating the frequencies of actions or characteristics” (Crow & Semmens, 2007, p.26). My research triangulates practitioner perspectives from surveys and semi-structured interviews, with crime data and policies and protocols, to develop a contextual understanding of the serious and organised crime problem and response in the UK. A mixed methods approach enabled me to address a breadth of research questions, and highlight convergences and divergences in the quantitative and

qualitative data sources, test the validity of outputs and arrive at a perspective supported by empirical evidence (Campbell et al., 2020; Greene et al., 1989).

2.1 An overview of the approach

Table 1 gives a broad overview of each research project, including all methodologies used and the key areas of contribution. In each project I observed legal and ethical standards of practice equivalent to general University research ethics protocols. I developed sharing agreements with each partner agency to protect the subjects in the administrative datasets or case studies, ensuring confidentiality was maintained and intrusion restricted to only what was necessary for the research. The protocols and systems for the treatment of data were clearly written into agreements to adhere to data protection laws. Protection measures were also put in place for practitioners who participated in interviews or surveys. An initial step before collecting the data was to provide a clear outline of who is doing the research, for what reasons and how the data would be used, so to receive the informed consent of each participant. All of this was guided by the principle that no harm should come to the participants for taking part.

Table 1: The methodologies and key contributions from research projects included in this submission

Research project	Methods	Key contribution to knowledge
Turning the tide against online child sexual abuse (2022)	<p><i>Qualitative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder interviews (n=67) <p><i>Quantitative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of law enforcement agencies (n=35) ▪ National crime data analysis – indecent images of children offence data, 2014-18 ▪ Police force crime data analysis – online CSA data, 2018-19 	Empirical research into the police response to online CSA; the nature of the demand for service, and a holistic analysis of policies, structures and resources across all layers of law enforcement.
Protecting people’s pensions: Understanding and preventing scams (2020)	<p><i>Qualitative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder interviews (n=12) ▪ Specialist fraud investigator interviews (n=6) <p><i>Quantitative</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National crime data analysis – fraud data, 2015-17 ▪ Survey of pension companies (n=40) 	The first empirical research into the nature of pension fraud / scams offending and the response architecture that encompassed a range of public and private sector agencies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data submissions by pension companies (n=13) 	
More than just a number: Improving the police response to victims of fraud (2018)*	<p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder interviews (n=107) ▪ Police investigation case files (n=25) <p>Quantitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey of law enforcement agencies (n=32) ▪ Survey of frontline officers (n=405) ▪ National crime data analysis – fraud data, 2016-17 ▪ Police force crime data analysis – fraud data, 2015-17 	<p>Empirical research into the police response to fraud; the nature of the demand for service, and a holistic analysis of policies, structures and resources across all layers of the police.</p> <p>The first empirical study of vulnerability in fraud victims; a conceptual analysis of its meaning and implication for police decision-making.</p>
The impact of organised crime in local communities (2017)**	<p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder interviews (n=210) <p>Quantitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police force (x2) crime data analysis, 2012-14 ▪ Online sex market advertisement data, 2015 	<p>Empirical research into the nature of organised crime as experienced by local communities and victims. It took a harm-based perspective to organised crime as a demand for public service.</p> <p>The first empirical study to develop data analytical approaches to improve understanding of organised fraud, acquisitive crime and sexual exploitation.</p>

* I produced two additional academic journal articles using the data collected during this project.

** I produced four additional academic journal articles using the data collected during this project.

3. Research to understand the nature and impact of serious and organised crime

Organised crime is a construct for which conceptual ambiguity has stifled research (Hobbs & Antonopoulos, 2014). Furthermore much falls into the business of 'high' policing which is less accessible to external research (Sheptycki, 2007), and in the case of fraud, has been effaced in both government and academia by higher priority areas of crime (Levi, 2014). The overriding aim of much of my commissioned research has been to appraise the nature and effectiveness of existing crime control strategies, which intrinsically requires a clear understanding of the problem (Harfield, 2008). This orientation entailed work to develop empirical evidence on the situational opportunities and methods in commissioning these crimes (Crocker et al., 2017a; Crocker et al., 2017b; Skidmore, 2020; Skidmore et al., 2017) and the experiences of victims and communities affected by them (Crocker et al., 2017a; Crocker et al., 2018; Skidmore et al., 2020a; Skidmore et al., 2020c).

I have developed empirical accounts that contextualise serious and organised crimes within the relevant community, market or technological settings, incorporating the experience of victims and affected communities. This represents one key contribution to current knowledge. Furthermore, this has supported critical discussion of the ways in which law enforcement in the UK operationalises organised crime and other related constructs, seriousness, harm, risk and vulnerability. In this way I have developed an understanding of the ways in which serious and organised crime and its various dimensions are constructed in public policies, and how these constructs interact and guide strategic and operational discretion across the different layers of law enforcement.

It is important to acknowledge my theoretical starting point in an area of crime blighted by conceptual dissonance (Von Lampe, 2016). I examine serious and organised crime first-and-foremost as an "object of governance" (Sheptycki, 2003), a policy construct for tackling criminality presumed to transcend ordinary police capability (Gilmour & France, 2011; Harfield, 2008). My predominant perspective is crime-oriented instead of offender-oriented (Edwards, 2016), which permitted a focus on crimes high on the national agenda but for which 'organisedness' and complexity, and their relation to seriousness and harm are less understood. In addition to serious crimes that are the business of 'high' policing such as sex trafficking and investment fraud (May & Bhardwa, 2018; Sheptycki, 2007; Weitzer, 2014), I examine other crimes that remain the business of "low" policing (Stelfox, 2003). Examples of the latter include organised theft and fraud perpetrated in high volumes, and crime and disorder emanating from organised crime groups that are resident in the community.

3.1 Understanding serious and organised crime

I include multiple papers for their development of analytical and methodological frameworks that further knowledge in areas of offending that are hidden from (or within) police data (Skidmore et al., 2020a, p. 5-8). I integrated analyses of recorded police data and that collected in interviews with practitioners in the police and other organisations, to produce a bottom-up perspective on serious and organised crime (Crocker et al., 2017a; Skidmore, 2020a). This gave an empirical perspective that was contextualised within local settings. This gives local meaning to serious and organised crime, an area that is otherwise weighted in political rhetoric, and a 'governmentality' that underpins the policies and perspectives of law enforcement (Edwards & Gill, 2002). I argue that a more complete local 'narrative' needs to view organised crime from the point of impact, in the form of victims and affected communities (Skidmore et al., 2020a, p. 17-19). I showed organised crime to be a problem that is "shaped by the experiences, understanding and priorities of different practitioners

across police, partner agencies and the community” and highlighted the benefits of integrating these perspectives to reveal “a picture of organised crime that is more pervasive and diverse” (Skidmore et al., 2020a, p. 15). These papers provide an empirical counterpoint to the dominant perspective anchored in offender-oriented theories (Mackenzie & Hamilton-Smith, 2011), and moreover, demonstrate how globalised crime remains “local at all points” (Latour, 1993 cited in Hobbs & Dunningham, 1998, p. 299). As an empirical touchstone for understanding the local manifestation of organised crime (Crocker et al., 2017a), one not wholly acknowledged by the public or frontline practitioners, this research was referenced in the national serious and organised crime strategy (HM Government, 2018) and also in subsequent papers with the similar aim to evidence local harm (Kirby et al., 2018).

In several publications I integrate police and interview data to provide detailed insights into how organised crime groups operate and impact in their resident neighbourhoods (Crocker et al., 2017a; Crocker et al., 2018, p.439-443). Building on existing police assessments of organised crime groups, my analyses profile the structure and activities of the groups within distinctive neighbourhood contexts. In an area where the transnational crime and national security agendas have predominated in the UK (Sergi, 2016), it gives a localised account of pervasive and insidious harm, including intimidation, violence and exploitation. It also revealed “a stratum of organised crime that is rooted in communities and is causing the problems that confronts practitioners on the ground” (Crocker et al., 2018, p. 447). Furthermore, using raw police data I explored the role of organised crime in perpetrating volume acquisitive crime, a subject neglected in public policies and the existing research (Crocker et al., 2017b). I developed an empirical approach to test for the presence of organised crime in police data by identifying a cohort of offenders who shared addresses or contact details in common with other acquisitive offenders (Crocker et al., 2017b, p. 4-6). The significance of this for co-offending and organised crime was explored, particularly the over-representation of foreign migrants. These outputs were cross-referenced with practitioner interviews and intelligence data to develop in-depth case studies that revealed links to cross-border offending and criminal exploitation.

I produced new insights into the role and significance of organised crime in the sex market in a single city (Crocker et al., 2017a, p.40-45). I identified premises that varied in their local embeddedness, their use of enablers in the local economy and their risk to sex workers. The illicit market in ‘managed’ brothels concealed cross-border criminality such as human trafficking, exploitation and money laundering. I interrogated police data to address the paucity of knowledge on risk contained within this hidden market. I developed evidence-based profiles of brothels in the city to explore the influence and operation of organised crime and related risks to sex workers (Crocker et al., 2017). The market was migrating from the streets to less visible off-street locations and was increasingly mediated through internet technologies (Sanders et al., 2016). I took inspiration from nascent methodologies in cybercrime research (Yip et al., 2013) to explore the potential to collect online communications data to examine the exploitation risk to sex workers on a marketing website (Skidmore et al., 2017, p. 3-7). A quantitative method was developed to identify a cohort of sex workers who posted the same or similar phone numbers, and the language, imagery and locations in the online profiles assessed against a criteria for risk. I introduced this paper as a pilot study and included a discussion on learning and methodological refinements (Skidmore et al., 2017), and was invited to consult with officials at the NCA who sought to develop a similar approach to generate operational intelligence on human trafficking.

3.2 Understanding serious and organised fraud

I applied the same theoretical perspective for examining serious and organised crime to my research into fraud (Crocker et al., 2017a; Skidmore, 2020; Skidmore et al., 2020c). Fraud has been subsumed into the serious and organised crime policy agenda in the UK (Doig & Levi, 2013) but is comprised of offenders, offending and victim experiences that are highly diverse. Its relation to key constructs such as complexity, seriousness and harm are ambiguous in the policies of government and law enforcement, and absent from the research literature (Levi, 2014). I used data in the national police fraud database to design a data driven methodology for examining the presence of organised crime in the fraud offences reported to Action Fraud (Crocker et al., 2017a, p. 91-96). Through a process of data-matching for individual crime records and analysing patterns in repeat offending, I produced estimates for the scale of fraud attributable to organised crime (Crocker et al., 2017a, p. 60-63). This criterion revealed patterns in key offending characteristics that included the links to co-offending, the rate and volume of offending, and the financial losses to victims.

In a subsequent paper I analysed pension fraud, a form of investment fraud that is complex, often transnational, and inflicts severe financial losses on to victims (Skidmore, 2020). One theorist argued that global fraud and organised crime is most usefully conceived as the:

... contingent relationships between settings, with their rich and varied opportunities (reflecting patterns of business, consumer and investment activities), the variable abilities of would-be perpetrators to recognize and act on those opportunities ... and their interactions with controls. (Levi, 2008, p.411).

I developed this perspective, taking the UK pensions market as the setting to show how the processes for commissioning these frauds interacted with the shifting legal and regulatory landscape, the business practices in the legitimate finance sector, and consumer behaviour (Skidmore, 2020, p. 13-19). I sourced evidence from vital new sources to get a perspective on a problem that eluded police data, including interviews with practitioners in the support services and financial regulators, and a survey to collect attitudinal and administrative data from pension companies. Furthermore, I developed six case studies that were the subject of intensive police investigation. I was able to show offenders who operated in plain sight by exploiting the licit services and practices to conceal their activities, wide-ranging modus operandi and complexity, and changes in offending patterns that adapted to the changed controls in the pensions market, including a shift away from crime to unethical business practices in a grey economy in investments (Skidmore, 2020).

Finally, the experience of the victim is an important determinant of seriousness (Kerr et al., 2013). However victims of fraud often fall short of societal ideals for victimhood, and even significant financial losses can be minimised or blamed on the victim (Button et al., 2014b; Button & Cross, 2017; Cross, 2015). I examined police strategies to absorb fraud into a wider vulnerability agenda, broadly intended to target resources to harm (Skidmore et al., 2018, p. 50-53). In the context of fraud the subject of vulnerability had evaded empirical scrutiny despite its growing strategic and operational significance in law enforcement. I completed detailed analyses of national fraud data to produce an empirical account of the vulnerability construct (Skidmore et al., 2020c, p. 52-55). This included examining vulnerability indicators and their distribution in a sample of fraud victims. Further, drawing from interview data, I analysed the concept of vulnerability as it was operationalised in strategies, protocols and practices. I identified three conflated dimensions of victim experience, each with distinctive implications for assessment and intervention; susceptibility to victimisation, susceptibility to repeat victimisation and the financial, social or emotional

impact of victimisation (Skidmore et al., 2020c). Rather than 'vulnerable' as a discrete category of victim I frame it as a multi-layered composite that by degrees, has significance for all victims. This research into vulnerability in the context of police policies and practices has provided a key reference point for others researching this new subject (Burton et al., 2022; Correia, 2021).

4. The effectiveness of crime control in serious and organised crime

An overriding objective of my research has been to empirically examine and assess crime control strategies in fraud, online CSA, and organised crime (Crocker et al., 2017a; Skidmore 2020; Skidmore et al., 2021; Skidmore et al., 2018). This work expands on prior research into the institutional architecture of the police, the configuration of resources, responsibilities and governance structures, and the police technologies and techniques to generate knowledge of problems, and methods to measure their effectiveness (Brooks & Button, 2011; Castle, 2008; Innes & Sheptycki, 2004; Long et al., 2016; Loveday, 2017; Hamilton-Smith & Mackenzie, 2010). Further, my research situates the crime control measures of law enforcement within the expansive ecology of sectors and organisations with a role in controlling fraud and cybercrime (Button et al., 2016; Skidmore, 2020; Skidmore et al., 2022; Wall, 2007).

Criminological research to appraise public policies and practices “necessarily entails some engagement with normative issues”, notably in this context, whether or not specific behaviours or actions ‘ought’ to be serious crimes and criminal justice or other resources directed to them (Bottoms, 2008, p.104). My research to understand how serious and organised crime is operationalised in public policies provided a window on to the ways in which this construct interacted and guided the discretion of law enforcement agencies. Effectiveness can be defined in multiple ways and as an initial step I examined how law enforcement accounted for its choices and outcomes, including criminal justice and social welfare outcomes as part of the overall harm reduction agenda (Sergi, 2013). The research design was iterative, incorporating an initial phase of open-ended enquiries to explore how effectiveness is framed and interpreted, and perceptions on performance and the challenges. I then developed frameworks and methodologies to undertake more targeted enquiries to examine the breadth of experience across national law enforcement (for example, national surveys) (King & Wincup., 2008). I use interpretive methodologies to examine the validity, transparency and accountability in the knowledge and strategies of law enforcement.

4.1 The effectiveness of crime control in fraud and online CSA

In treating serious and organised crime as an “object of governance” (Sheptycki, 2003) the significance of the construct is derived in part from the capacity of the state to implement effective controls. Serious and organised crime is not just a thing that is perceived by public officials, but also a perceived requirement for action. This is particularly salient in the context of fraud and cybercrime which has rapidly ascended into the dominant form of crime in the UK, but for which there are organisational and cultural barriers to adapting in the police (Bossler & Holt, 2012; Loveday, 2017). Cyber and economic crimes do not in all cases conform with conventions in offender-oriented theories of organised crime (Lavorgna & Sergi, 2016) but have a complexity (for example, cross-border and technical sophistication) that requires specialist strategic and operational controls and resources. The perceived imperative to control crime that transcends general police capabilities is evident in the increasingly centralised policies and structures for managing serious and organised crime (Harfield, 2008), including national systems for coordinating resources to respond to fraud and online CSA.

I produced empirical accounts to contextualise fraud and online CSA and refracted this evidence through the lens of the police and wider law enforcement institutions, to test their alignment with the crimes in focus (Skidmore, 2020; Skidmore et al., 2018; Skidmore et al.,

2020b; Skidmore et al., 2022). I produced evidence on criminal investigation, protective services and crime prevention using surveys and interviews with practitioners from across the national law enforcement network. This gives an in-depth perspective from inside the police on the nature of these crimes, the capabilities and resource that are available to intervene and importantly, those that are required. I produced theorised accounts for dysfunction variously rooted in the occupational culture, knowledge, resources, structures and governance in law enforcement and other services (Skidmore, 2020, p. 27-31; Skidmore et al., 2022, p. 44-68; Skidmore et al., 2020b, p. 371-377; Skidmore et al., 2020c, p. 54-61; Skidmore et al., 2018, p. 67-78). Key cross-cutting themes include technological and workforce capability (notably financial and digital investigation), the validity of the data and harm-based analytical frameworks for guiding discretion, and the governance and coordination of resources across law enforcement and wider public services.

In fraud I build on previous research into the strategic and operational barriers to effective law enforcement (Button et al., 2012; Doig & Levi, 2013). My research revealed the deficits in baseline capability across the workforce and also specialist investigative capability, incongruent governance structures and a detachment of understanding, priorities and accountabilities within and across the different layers of law enforcement. (Skidmore et al., 2018; Skidmore et al., 2020b; Skidmore et al., 2020c). More fundamentally, the effect of the territorial diffusion of offenders, victims and evidence in fraud, which confused 'ownership' and challenged the conventional roles and responsibilities of agencies across the institution. This research has become a key reference point in both academic (Button, 2021; Loveday & Jung, 2021) and wider debate, including a public sector review of the national police structures for investigating fraud (Mackey & Savill, 2020) and the national fraud policing strategy (National Police Chiefs' Council [NPCC], 2019).

Online CSA, which includes viewing or sharing indecent images of children and online grooming, has surged due to mainstream digital technologies and improved capabilities to detect and respond to these crimes (Carr, 2017; Wager et al., 2018). My research critically examines law enforcement systems for tackling this high volume and high risk area of cybercrime (Skidmore et al., 2022). I showed law enforcement had become overwhelmed by the volume of reports, and that despite the considerable diversity in offender profiles, the predominant focus of public policies was on reactive law enforcement and offender-oriented controls (Skidmore et al, 2022). A consequence was that the police were incapable of configuring resources to harm. I orientated law enforcement within wider public policies and legislative frameworks. This included the practical and ethical considerations in balancing security and justice interventions with alternative strategies for controlling risk such as health, welfare and education (Skidmore et al., 2022, p. 78-81, and p. 92-94).

Previous research has identified a so-called 'scientification' of processes for generating knowledge in law enforcement where understanding and discretion are guided by systematic analyses of police data (Innes et al., 2005). I examine how police culture and values can permeate these systems to influence outputs and decisions (Innes & Sheptycki, 2004), and the strain in translating imperfect police data into actionable demand for complex and low visibility crime (Skidmore et al., 2018, 38-39; Skidmore et al., 2020a, p. 17-19; Skidmore et al., 2022). I analysed the composite constructs used to articulate the nature of this demand, specifically organised crime, cybercrime, vulnerability and harm (Skidmore et al., 2018; Skidmore et al., 2020a; Skidmore et al., 2020c; Skidmore et al., 2022), all of which are theoretically under-developed (Correia, 2019; Hobbs, 2013; Paoli & Greenfield, 2018; Wall, 2001). Specifically, the way in which police analyses reduced these concepts to dyadic categories (for example, victims were either vulnerable or not vulnerable), to delineate cases on the basis of their eligibility for resources. I show how this knowledge reflected back and

reinforced police discretion that is rooted in existing structures and resources (notably localism), and relatedly, culture, discourse and values oriented primarily to law enforcement outcomes. This is evident in the circumscribed assessments of organised crime and vulnerability in the context of fraud (Skidmore et al., 2020b, p. 371-373; Skidmore et al., 2020c, p. 56-61).

4.2 Prevention strategies for serious and organised crime

There is growing support for integrating serious and organised crime into theories that treat crimes as the consequence of rational choices made by offenders who respond to opportunities that arise in their routine activities and environments (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Cornish & Clark, 1986). In this context, opportunity theory deviates from a conventional emphasis in organised crime on offender characteristics and law enforcement, and introduces new theoretical and methodological perspectives for understanding the commission of these crimes and in turn, alternative control strategies for preventing them (Ayling, 2014; Hancock & Laycock, 2010; Hicks, 1998). In pension scams and online CSA, my examination of the social, technological and economic “structural antecedents” (Edwards & Levi, 2008), provided the basis for an appraisal of the systemic approach to crime prevention (Skidmore, 2020; Skidmore et al., 2022). In the case of pension scams I identified criminal opportunities arising from changes to legislation that governed the market, consumer behaviour, a porous network of state regulators, and partial guardianship in the private sector (Skidmore, 2020, p. 21-30). I posited that effective strategies rested on robust guardianship through a reinforcement of both the state regulatory system and the security policies and protocols in industry (Skidmore, 2020. P. 6).

In online CSA I examined the criminal opportunities arising from the practices and product design in the technology sector, notably the limited guardianship for children on social media platforms and widespread availability of indecent images of children on the open web (Skidmore et al, 2022, p. 109-114). Using a situational crime prevention framework I examined the role of education, health and technology sectors in restricting offending opportunities and diverting the least harmful or “determined” offenders from repeat offending (Skidmore et al., 2022, p. 98-115; Smallbone and Wortley, 2017, p. 145). A report on the future of crime prevention for a strategic review of police in England and Wales drew much evidence from these reports (Muir, 2021). Skidmore (2020) was also a key source of evidence in a government inquiry into pension scams led by the Work and Pensions Committee¹.

¹ [Work and Pensions Committee to hold session on experiences of victims of pension scams - Committees - UK Parliament](#) – accessed 08.01.2021

5. The key contributions to knowledge

The table below highlights the key contributions to knowledge from each paper to understanding serious and organised crime and the effectiveness of crime control.

Table 2: A summary of the key contributions to knowledge for each submitted paper

Publication	Key contribution
Crocker et al. (2017a)	<p>This research takes a comprehensive view of organised crime within the localities of two police force areas, integrating perspectives from law enforcement and a multitude of frontline services to evidence the full range of criminality and harms experienced in the affected communities. I applied interpretive analyses to produce a locally contextualised narrative for organised crime, one rooted in crime, harm and local settings. I revealed a more diverse and pervasive footprint from organised crime than that captured in offender-oriented accounts of organised crime.</p> <p>For this study I collected and integrated extensive quantitative and qualitative data and developed new methodologies to examine data on offenders, offending and victims and test for the presence of organised crime. This included analyses of hidden and under-researched areas of serious and organised crime including fraud and crime linked to the adult sex market.</p> <p>I produced evidence on the offending and harms that emanated from the local organised crime groups known to the police, including a comparison across neighbourhoods that differed in their socio-economic and demographic composition.</p>
Crocker et al. (2017b)	<p>This is the first peer-reviewed study to examine the presence of organised crime within the high volume acquisitive crimes (theft and shoplifting) reported to the police. A new quantitative approach was developed to analyse police administrative data to reveal patterns in co-offending.</p> <p>The findings were integrated with qualitative data from police intelligence and practitioner interviews. This study produced new empirical insights into large networks of foreign national suspects with links to diverse local criminality, including criminal exploitation and benefits fraud.</p>
Crocker et al. (2018)	<p>This is the first peer-reviewed study to integrate police data and interviews with practitioners in the local police and other frontline services, to produce in-depth empirical analyses of the characteristics of organised crime groups identified by the police. It revealed crime groups that were divergent in their composition, offending and local impact, reflecting to some degree, the diversity in the communities from which they emanated.</p>

	<p>This research produced evidence to show organised crime groups that impacted in the areas in which they lived, thereby reflecting local problems that required local intervention. I used the empirical profiles of organised crime groups to frame a discussion of local control strategies. I showed official narratives of organised crime that were not contextualised within local settings, in part reflective of the dominant enforcement agenda over local problem-oriented control strategies.</p>
<p>Skidmore (2020)</p>	<p>This study provides rare insights into investment fraud and is the first empirical study of scams and fraud in the pensions industry. I collected case study data on offenders and the methods used in the commission of these complex crimes. It showed the role of enablers in the licit economy and actors operating in grey markets in sales and marketing and financial services.</p> <p>This is a hidden area of crime and sits outside of the data or experience in the police. I integrated diverse perspectives using interviews with practitioners from across the regulatory and support sector. This includes important data and insights collected from pension companies as frontline responders to consumers at risk of pension scams.</p> <p>This study gives an illustrative and granular account of the situational opportunities and their interaction with the shifting legal and regulatory controls in the specific setting of the pensions and financial service markets in the UK (Levi, 2008). It shows patterns in offending and its interaction with changes in legislation, controls and consumer behaviour.</p> <p>I critically examined the strategic response across the network of state regulators and industry stakeholders, including controls to restrict the opportunities to offend.</p>
<p>Skidmore et al. (2022)</p>	<p>I collected empirical evidence from within national, regional and local law enforcement, including survey, interview and crime data. I provide a critical perspective on the structures, policies, protocols and resources for intervening against online CSA crimes, encompassing criminal investigation, protective services and crime prevention strategies.</p> <p>The research integrates administrative and qualitative data from law enforcement to develop a frontline perspective on the characteristics of these crimes and how they are operationalised as police demand. I situated this evidence within the existing criminological, technological and psychological evidence on these crimes, offenders and victims.</p> <p>This is the first empirical study to examine police discretion in an area of cybercrime that is both high volume and high risk. It explores the configuration of structures, resources and tactical interventions to reported and non-reported crime within the harm</p>

	<p>reduction policy agenda, particularly the overriding construct of risk in relation to serious online or offline sexual abuse.</p> <p>I develop an empirical perspective on the distinctive workforce and technological capabilities in law enforcement for delivering effective crime control.</p> <p>The analyses orientate law enforcement agencies and activities within the wider social and technological settings for online CSA, including the “structural antecedents” (Edwards & Levi, 2008) and controls across the wider ecology of organisations.</p>
<p>Skidmore et al. (2020a)</p>	<p>This is the first peer-reviewed study to integrate divergent data sources including police crime and intelligence data and interviews with a variety of stakeholders, to produce a multi-layered assessment of the nature and impact of organised crime within two neighbourhoods. It incorporated the offender-oriented perspective of law enforcement, and a crime-oriented perspective to account for local victims of serious crimes such as fraud (Von Lampe, 2016).</p> <p>This study integrated local perspectives from within the police and other frontline services, to produce an assessment of harms attributable to organised crime groups living in two separate neighbourhoods. This assessment expanded on established police assessments of impact, giving evidence of multiple forms of localised impact including anti-social behaviour and exploitation.</p> <p>In comparing the various analytical outputs this study gives evidence on the pliability of the construct as it is operationalised, and the implications for the knowledge and interventions from the police.</p>
<p>Skidmore et al. (2017)</p>	<p>The first peer-reviewed study that collected and analysed communications data from an online source to profile the risk of exploitation in the adult sex market, using quantitative and qualitative methodologies.</p> <p>The study identified a cohort of sex workers in the off-street sex market that had operated as a collective, with some showing regular movement to different locations and characteristics in their online profiles that signalled a risk of exploitation.</p> <p>This study was the first to index criteria for human trafficking and exploitation risk (International Labour Office, 2009) and map this on to information collected from a marketing website for sex workers. It was a new and exploratory approach to studying a hidden population, and a poorly understood and hidden area of crime.</p>

<p>Skidmore et al. (2020b)</p>	<p>This peer-reviewed study used survey and interview data collected from frontline officers and specialist fraud investigation teams to give an authoritative perspective on the attitudes, capabilities and challenges in investigating fraud.</p> <p>The study examines the alignment of structures, resources and capabilities in law enforcement to the distinctive problem of fraud, a low priority and under-researched area of crime. It represents the experiences and perspectives of non-specialist frontline personnel in investigating fraud offending (that can be serious and complex), that involve digital and cross-border investigation.</p> <p>This study provides new insight into the strategic and organisational culture of the police, and the ways in which these influence protocols and attitudes that underly discretion in the provision of investigation and protective services.</p>
<p>Skidmore et al. (2020c)</p>	<p>The vulnerability agenda in law enforcement is central to crime control strategies but in the context of fraud these policies have evaded empirical scrutiny. This is the first peer-reviewed study to collect perspectives in a survey and semi-structured interviews from across law enforcement to examine the meaning given to the vulnerability construct in the context of fraud.</p> <p>This study examines the distribution of vulnerability characteristics across victims of fraud. I analysed national police data that includes victim characteristics and self-reported experiences of victimisation. The study revealed an association between self-reported vulnerability and impact of the offence on victims. Higher vulnerability and impact were shown to concentrate in certain fraud offence categories.</p> <p>This study showed inconsistency in how vulnerability was conceptualised in the police. It was variously construed as susceptibility to victimisation, susceptibility to repeat victimisation and / or the impact of victimisation. Each had distinctive implications for the configuration of resources assigned to respond.</p>
<p>Skidmore et al. (2018)</p>	<p>This is an empirical study that gives a critical perspective on the structures, policies, protocols and resources in UK police forces and wider law enforcement for responding to fraud reported by the public, including criminal investigation, protective services and crime prevention.</p> <p>This is the first study of fraud policing to collect evidence from national, regional and local stakeholders in law enforcement, including a national survey of specialist lead investigators, a local survey of officers in police forces and semi-structured interviews with officers in the City of London Police, Regional Organised Crime Units and police force areas.</p>

	<p>This study examines the functionality of the nationalised systems for coordinating the police response to fraud. This study concludes that the governance, strategies, resources and culture that are rooted in localism, and a low baseline capability in the workforce, constitute a misalignment of the problem and response. The characteristics that distinguish fraud offending, most notably that it is a high volume, cross border and technologically enabled crime, do not register with local policies for directing resources, particularly those guided by the principles of harm reduction.</p> <p>The research incorporates analyses of national police data to profile the nature of the demand from fraud. This included various offence characteristics that have relevance for law enforcement intervention and effectiveness; fraud offence categories, cross-border offending, the intersection with cybercrime and victim impact and vulnerability.</p> <p>This research builds on research into the role of specialist fraud resources (Button et al., 2014a), by examining the configuration of responsibilities and capabilities for criminal investigation across the workforce. Evidence from surveys and interviews showed that non-specialist officers had the predominant remit for criminal investigations of fraud. Furthermore, it showed the disparity between the capabilities required and those that were available. This is the first research to examine the positioning of fraud within the policy constructs of harm and vulnerability. It found deficits in knowledge and analytical capability to apply these constructs in the fraud context, and resultant barriers to rationalising demand or resource allocation decisions.</p>
--	---

Limitations

In examining serious and organised crime much of the data used in my research was collected from within law enforcement agencies, and so to some extent, it views the problem as it is constructed and administrated by law enforcement (Hobbs & Antonopoulos, 2014). There are some limitations to this methodological approach. Firstly, many of these crimes are not reported or publicly observable, and so absent from the knowledge and data available to law enforcement. Secondly, the methods for policing hidden crimes are skewed to fit with internal law enforcement processes such as priority-setting and resource configuration (Innes & Sheptycki, 2004). And finally, the insidious presence and impact of these criminals can go unregistered in law enforcement systems (Campana and Varese, 2018). A comprehensive picture needs to also incorporate the perspectives of victims and individuals from within the impacted groups or communities, such as in victimisation surveys (Kirby et al, 2018; Tilley & Hopkins, 2008).

Furthermore, in focusing on the efforts of law enforcement to control specific offence categories (e.g. fraud), my research gives less coverage to some of the broader cross-cutting controls and related actors that play a key role in restricting criminal opportunities. One notable example being the range of financial controls in the public and private sector to suppress opportunities to launder the proceeds of crime and restrict access to illicit finance (for example see Bullock, 2014; Levi, 2020).

6. The significance and impact of the research

In evaluating research and its contribution there are multiple perspectives on the specific outputs or outcomes that constitute value. Particularly salient is the “distinction between ‘academic impact’ understood as the intellectual contribution to one’s field of study within academia and ‘external socio-economic impact’ beyond academia” (Penfield et al., 2014, p.1). At the Police Foundation my primary objective is to influence and invoke change in the government, the police and other state bodies. This ‘societal’ impact, particularly “informing public debate ... [to] improve policy-making” (Moed & Halevi, 2014, p.11) has underpinned my research and also my use of existing academic knowledge. This is illustrated by the following reference to Skidmore et al. (2018):

We were surprised by the breadth of contemporary academic research about fraud that is available. The think-tank, the Police Foundation, bring much of this research together and it challenges some of the conventional thinking in law enforcement. Academics should be invited to ‘check and challenge’ the programme’s direction. (Mackey & Savill, 2020, p.46)

Regardless of the emphasis on ‘societal’ impact, the nature of my original research into crime and policing means the work simultaneously contributes to academic knowledge and debate, a contribution which has been reinforced by the accompanying peer review journal articles. This point is highlighted in a paper from a prominent academic figure:

The Police Foundation (2018) and subsequent articles published by its authors (Skidmore et al., 2020) have pushed for a more radical solution recommending [that] ... all investigations should be handled by regional fraud investigation units that would exist alongside the Regional Organised Crime Units. (Button, 2021, p.10)

In addition to these conceptual distinctions there are multiple approaches that can be used to evidence the impact of research. In the following section I provide bibliometric data in conjunction with qualitative accounts to contextualise and expand on the figures provided. I first discuss the evidence of my contribution to existing knowledge, followed by evidence of the usage of my work across disciplines, and finally, “network-based indicators” of my influence in this field (Moed & Halevi, 2014).

Evidence of impact

Six of the papers in this submission are peer reviewed, attesting to the quality and contribution of each paper (Penfield et al., 2014), and in part, validating the wider research. The findings and conclusions in Police Foundation reports are also subject to less formal, but nonetheless expert scrutiny from selected stakeholders and experts prior to publication. Perhaps the most indicative measure of a contribution to knowledge is the number of citations in subsequent research (see Table 3). These figures are influenced by several extraneous factors. First, half of my papers were published less than two years ago. Second, fraud remains a peripheral subject in criminological research (Levi, 2014), providing greater scope to make an original contribution but a smaller pool of active researchers to cite the work. Third, my research has an explicit UK focus and while certainly holds wider relevance, may receive less coverage in the international literature. Finally, my non-academic publications may get overlooked as grey literature; there was no reference for Skidmore (2020) on Google Scholar. Moreover, a search confined to the academic literature overlooks the significance of my work on the wider knowledge base as is evident in government

strategies and reviews and reports from influential policy groups (HM Government, 2018; Mackey & Savill, 2020; NPCC, 2019; Scottish Government, 2017; Wood et al., 2021).

Research can lead to the formation of “new understandings and possibilities, and to the quality of public and professional discourse and debate” without leaving “tell-tale signs of its passage, role or impact” (Davies et al., 2005, p.11). A larger readership intrinsically indicates usage but also the likelihood that it has had influence on knowledge, understanding and attitudes. Table 3 gives the number of downloads for each report published on the Police Foundation website. These numbers are partial because data is missing for 2021 and they do not account for access through other websites². Summaries and some full texts of my research are also available on ResearchGate which reports a total of 963 views, including 245 full text reads³.

To influence wider public discourse I disseminated my work through a multitude of channels to help reach different audiences. The research from the organised crime project was distilled into four thematic briefing papers to present the findings in a more accessible format⁴; the total number of downloads was 18,774 and citations were found in two academic publications. Each report was accompanied by a blog on the Police Foundation website and I was invited to produce magazine articles for Police Professional, Policing Insight and Fraudscape (Cifas, 2017). I also submitted evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade and Financial Crime and Scamming. Furthermore, the news media showed interest in the research on fraud and the adult sex market, including the Times⁵, Observer⁶, and Telegraph⁷, and also an invitation to speak on BBC Radio 4’s Sunday Programme and ongoing engagement from journalists at Which? Magazine.

Table 3: Measure of research impact by publication

Publications	Google Scholar citations⁸	Police Foundation website downloads
Crocker et al., 2017a	20	7,868*
Crocker et al., 2017b	5	N/A
Skidmore et al., 2017	3	N/A
Crocker et al., 2018	3	N/A
Skidmore et al., 2018	5	6,434*
Skidmore, 2020	N/A	1,719**
Skidmore et al., 2020a	0	N/A
Skidmore et al., 2020b	7	N/A
Skidmore et al., 2020c	2	N/A
Skidmore et al., 2022	N/A	N/A

* Data available up to May 2020.

** Data available for September to December 2020.

² For example, see - [Protecting people’s pensions: preventing pension scams - The People’s Pension \(thepeoplespension.co.uk\)](https://thepeoplespension.co.uk) – accessed 24.01.2021

³ Data retrieved 09.01.2022

⁴ [Publications – The Police Foundation \(police-foundation.org.uk\)](https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/publications) – accessed 25.11.2021

⁵ [Most fraudsters get away with it ‘because police have no strategy’ | News | The Times](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/story/most-fraudsters-get-away-with-it-because-police-have-no-strategy-2021-01-14)

⁶ [Police criticised as organised gangs gain control of sex industry | Organised crime | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/01/14/police-criticised-as-organised-gangs-gain-control-of-sex-industry)

⁷ [Pension firms need more powers to stop scammers, report warns \(telegraph.co.uk\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/01/14/pension-firms-need-more-powers-to-stop-scammers-report-warns/)

⁸ This does not include eight citations in my own subsequent papers.

Finally, I will discuss the links I have cultivated with groups and networks, under the assumption that researchers “who develop and maintain a prolific research network are not only more productive but also more active, visible, and established” (Moed & Halevi, 2015, p.6). I have contributed to discussions and research in these areas both through stakeholder engagement and my continued research. I have presented at high profile practitioner events including the national law enforcement Serious and Organised Crime Exhibition Conference (SOCEX, 2018), and more recently, a Westminster Insight event on Policing Cybercrime (2021). In 2018 I sat on a national advisory group for HMICFRS to steer the direction and conclusions in a HMICFRS report on fraud policing. More recently I was asked to speak at a seminar for the House of Lords select committee on the Fraud Act 2006 and Digital Fraud.

I have contributed to academic conferences including the second general conference of the Standing Group on Organised Crime (2017) and a plenary session at the Portsmouth Counter Fraud Conference (2021) on the future of policing fraud. I was a member of the advisory board and peer reviewed three reports published by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. I have peer reviewed multiple articles on fraud and financial crime for *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* and the *Security Journal*. I was asked to write an accompanying commentary to a recent article on fraud policing (Loveday & Jung, 2021).

And I continue to produce work in these areas. I recently completed research funded by the Home Office to understand the pathways and methods of serious fraud offenders, co-authored an article on preventing insurance fraud for the 2022 edition of the *Handbook of Security* (Timofeyev & Skidmore, 2022), and am currently leading research to understand ‘disruption’ as a mode of crime control for tackling serious and organised crime.

7. Conclusion

This thesis positions my body of work into the context of wider theoretical and empirical research into serious and organised crime, and furthermore, research into the design and effectiveness of crime control. In so doing it gives clear evidence of the contribution of my work in developing knowledge in the field of serious and organised crime. The papers included in this submission are bound together by a crime-oriented perspective that integrates evidence on offenders, victims and impacted communities, and also the various structural contexts that give rise to offending opportunities. This enabled a focus on offence categories which in the frame of serious and organised crime were under-researched, including fraud, volume acquisitive crime, illegal forms of prostitution and online CSA. I used interpretive methods of analysis to develop the evidence on organisedness and complexity, and their relation to seriousness and harm. This is illustrated in my research into fraud which introduced new insights on impact, vulnerability and the processes for commissioning complex pension frauds. Furthermore, the evidence on these various crimes has fed into analyses to understand the nature and effectiveness of state intervention. I have collected extensive data through surveys, interviews and access to administrative datasets in law enforcement. This empirical evidence facilitated the development of theoretical accounts to explain effectiveness under the themes of occupational culture, knowledge, resources, structures and the governance arrangements across law enforcement. Furthermore, drawing on opportunity theories I situated fraud and online CSA within the wider social, technological and financial settings, helping to position law enforcement within a broad ecology of organisations and sectors with a prospective role in crime control.

The relative significance of my contribution to research can be appraised from a multitude of perspectives, notably through measures of 'academic' and 'societal' impact. At the Police Foundation I have a role to undertake research that influences public policies, and the evidence provided in this submission demonstrates the considerable traction my work has gained within government, law enforcement and wider stakeholders. This includes the references to my work in reports published by public sector officials, coverage in public and practitioner-based media and my continued engagement with the relevant practitioner networks. Importantly, my research draws from robust empirical methods and is original, collecting valuable data from within law enforcement to explore crimes that are hidden and hard-to-reach, which gives it the versatility to permeate academic debate. I have successfully submitted six papers, tested through rigorous peer review, and given evidence to show that academics are citing my work. And finally, I continue to work in this area, building on the knowledge and methods for researching serious and organised crime that I have developed during these projects.

Word Count – 10,171

Reference list

- Albrecht, H.-J. (2008). Police, policing and organised crime: Lessons from organised crime research. *European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin*, (2), 207-218.
- Ayling, J. (2014). "Going Dutch"? Comparing approaches to preventing organised crime in Australia and the Netherlands. *The European Review of Organised Crime* 1(1), 78-107.
- Bossler A. M., and Holt T. J. (2012). 'Patrol officers' perceived role in responding to cybercrime. *Policing: An international Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 35 (1), pp. 165-181.
- Bottoms, A. (2008). The relationship between theory and empirical observations in criminology. In King, R.D., & Wincup, E. (eds) *Doing Research on Crime and Justice: Second edition*, 75-116. Oxford University Press.
- Brooks, G., & Button, M. (2011). The police and fraud investigation and the case for a nationalised solution in the United Kingdom. *The Police Journal*, Volume 84.
- Bullock, K. (2014). Criminal benefit, the confiscation order and the post-conviction confiscation regime. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 62, 45–64.
- Burton, A., Cooper, C., Dar, A., Mathews, L., & Tripathi, K. (2022). Exploring how, why and in what contexts older adults are at risk of financial cybercrime victimisation: A realist review. *Experimental Gerontology*, 159.
- Button, M. (2021). Hiding behind the veil of Action Fraud: The police response to economic crime in England and Wales and evaluating the case for regionalization or a national economic crime agency. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 15, Issue 3, Pages 1758–1772.
- Button, M, Blackburn, D. & Shepherd, D. (2016). The fraud 'Justice Systems': A scoping study on the civil, regulatory and private paths to 'Justice' for fraudsters. University of Portsmouth. <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/criminal-justice-system-deals-fewer-two-cent-detected-fraudsters>
- Button, M., Blackburn, D., & Tunley, M. (2014a). 'The not so thin blue line after all?' Investigative resources dedicated to fighting fraud/ economic crime in the United Kingdom. *Policing*, Volume 9, Number 2, pp. 129–142.
- Button, M., & Cross, C. (2017). *Cyber frauds, scams and their victims*. Routledge
- Button, M., Lewis, C., Shepherd, D., Brooks, G., & Wakefield, A. (2012). Fraud and punishment: Enhancing deterrence through more effective sanctions: Main report. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth.
- Button, M., Lewis, C., & Tapley, J. (2014b). Not a victimless crime: The impact of fraud on individual victims and their families. *Security Journal*, 27(1), 36-54.
- Campana, P. & Varese, F. (2018). Organized crime in the United Kingdom: Illegal governance of markets and communities. *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 58, No. 6, 1381–1400.
- Campbell, R., Goodman-Williams, R., Feeney H., & Fehler-Cabral, G. (2020). Assessing triangulation across methodologies, methods, and stakeholder groups: The joys, woes, and politics of interpreting convergent and divergent data. *American Journal of Evaluation* 2020, Vol. 41(1) 125-144.

- Carr, J. (2017). A brief history of child safety online: Child abuse images on the internet. Brown, J. (eds) *Online Risk to Children: Impact, Protection and Prevention*. NSPCC / Wiley Blackwell.
- Castle, A. (2008). Measuring the impact of law enforcement on organized crime. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 11:135–156.
- Cifas (2017). Fraudscape 2017. Cifas.
<https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2020-02/Cifas-Fraudscape-2017.pdf>
- Cohen, L., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4,, pp. 588-608.
- Cornish, D., & Clarke, R. V. (1986). *The reasoning criminal: Rational choice perspectives on offending*. Springer- Verlag.
- Correia, S. (2019). Responding to victimisation in a digital world: a case study of fraud and computer misuse reported in Wales. *Crime Science*, 8(1).
- Correia, S. (2021). Cybercrime victims: victim policy through a vulnerability lens. SSRN Working Paper.
- Crocker, R., Garner, S., Skidmore, M., Webb, S., Graham, J., & Gill, M. (2017a). The impact of organised crime in local communities. The Police Foundation. <https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/publication/reducing-impact-organised-crime-local-communities/>
- Crocker, R., Skidmore, M., Webb, S., Garner, S., Gill, M., & Graham, J. (2017b). Uncovering organized shoplifting and theft networks. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 13, Issue 4, 377–385.
- Crocker, R., Webb, S., Skidmore, M., Garner, S., Gill, M., & Graham, J. (2018). Tackling local organised crime groups: lessons from research in two UK cities. *Trends in Organized Crime*, Volume 22, 433–449.
- Cross, C. (2015). No laughing matter: Blaming the victim of online fraud. *International Review of Victimology*, Volume: 21 issue: 2, 187-204.
- Crow, I., & Semmens, N. (2007). *Researching Criminology*. Open University Press.
- Davies, H., Nutley, S., & Walter, I. (2005). Assessing the impact of social science research: conceptual, methodological and practical issues. ESRC.
<https://esrc.ukri.org/files/research/research-and-impact-evaluation/international-symposium/>
- Doig, A., & Levi, M. (2013). A case of arrested development? Delivering the UK National Fraud Strategy within competing policing policy priorities. *Public Money & Management*, 33:2, 145-152.
- Edwards, A. (2016). Actors, scripts, scenes and scenarios: Key trends in policy and research on the organisation of serious crimes. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 6 (4) , pp. 975-998.
- Edwards, A., & Gill, P. (2002). The politics of 'transnational organized crime': Discourse, reflexivity and the narration of 'threat'. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 245–270.
- Edwards, A., & Levi, M. (2008). Researching the organization of serious crimes. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, Vol: 8(4): 363–388.

- Gilmour, S., & France, R. (2011). Local policing and transnational organized crime. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, Vol. 25, Nos. 1 –2,, 17 –26.
- Greene J.C., Caracelli V.J., & Graham W.F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3):255–274.
- Hamilton-Smith, N., & Mackenzie, S. (2010). The geometry of shadows: a critical review of organised crime risk assessments. *Policing & Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 257-279.
- Hancock, G., & Laycock, G. (2010). Organised crime and crime scripts: Prospects for disruption. Bullock, K., Clarke, R.V., & Tilley, N. (eds) *Situational Prevention of Organised Crimes*, 172-192. Routledge.
- Hicks, D. (1998). Thinking about organized crime prevention. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 325-350.
- HM Government (2018). Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. TSO.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-and-organised-crime-strategy-2018>
- Harfield, C. (2008). The organization of ‘organized crime policing’ and its international context. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, Vol: 8(4): 483–507.
- Hobbs, D. (2013). *Lush Life: Constructing Organized Crime in the UK*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobbs, D., & Antonopoulos, G.A. (2014). How to research organized crime. *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford University Press.
- Hobbs, D., & Dunnighan, C. (1998). Glocal organised crime: Context and pretext. Ruggiero, V., South, N., & Taylor, I. (eds) *The New European Criminology: Crime and Social Order in Europe*. Routledge: London.
- Hough, M. (2014). Confessions of a recovering ‘administrative criminologist’: Jock Young, quantitative research and policy research. *Crime Media Culture*, Vol. 10(3) 215–226.
- Innes, M., Fielding, N. & Cope, N. (2005). ‘The appliance of science?’ The Theory and Practice of Crime Intelligence Analysis. *British Journal of Criminology*, 45, 39–57.
- Innes, M., & Sheptycki, J. (2004). From detection to disruption. *International Criminal Justice Review*, Vol: 14(1).
- International Labour Office (2009). Operational indicators of trafficking in human beings. European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/operational-indicators-trafficking-human-beings_en
- Kerr, J., Owen, R., Nicholls, C.M. & Button, M. (2013) *Research on sentencing online fraud offences*. Sentencing Council.
- King, R.D. & Wincup, E. (2008). The process of criminological research. In King, R.D., & Wincup, E. (eds) *Doing Research on Crime and Justice: Second edition*, 13-43. Oxford University Press.
- Kirby, S., McManus, M., & Boulton, L. (2018). Examining the demographic profile and attitudes of citizens in areas where organized crime groups proliferate. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 21:172–188.

- Lea, J., & Young, J. (1984). *What is to be done about law and order? Crisis in the eighties*. Cox and Wyman Ltd.
- Lavorgna, A., & Sergi, A. (2016). Serious, therefore organised? A critique of the emerging “cyber-organised crime” rhetoric in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, Vol. 10 (2): 170–187.
- Levi, M. (2008) Organized fraud and organizing frauds: Unpacking research on networks and organization. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, Volume: 8 issue: 4, 389-419.
- Levi, M. (2014). Organized fraud. In *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, p. 460. Oxford University Press.
- Levi, M. (2020). Evaluating the control of money laundering and its underlying offences: The search for meaningful data. *Asian Journal of Criminology*, 15: 301–320.
- Long, M., Alison, L., Tejeiro, R., Hendircks, E., & Giles, S. (2016). KIRAT: Law enforcement’s prioritization tool for investigating indecent image offenders. *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*, Vol.22, No. 1, 12-21.
- Loveday, B. (2017). Still plodding along? The police response to the changing profile of crime in England and Wales. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, Vol. 19(2) 101–109
- Loveday, B., & Jung, J. (2021). A Current and Future Challenge to Contemporary Policing: The Changing Profile of Crime and the Police Response. Examples of Policing Fraud in Two Police Jurisdictions: England and Wales and South Korea. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 15, Issue 3, 1633–1650.
- Mackey, C., & Savill, J. (2020). Fraud: A review of the national ‘lead force’ responsibilities of the City of London Police and the effectiveness of investigations in the UK. City of London Police. <https://redd-monitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/action-fraud-report.pdf>
- Maruna, S. (2010). Mixed method research in criminology: Why not go both ways? Piquero, A.R., & Weisburd, D. (eds) *Handbook of Quantitative Criminology*, 123-140. Springer.
- May, T., & Bhardwa, B. (2018). *Organised crime groups involved in fraud*. Crime Prevention and Security Management. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mayhew, P. (2016). In defence of administrative criminology. *Crime Science*, 5:7.
- Moed, H.F., & Halevi, G. (2015). Multidimensional assessment of scholarly research impact. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 66(10), 1988-2002.
- Muir, R. (2021). Taking prevention seriously: The case for a crime and harm prevention system. The Police Foundation. https://www.policingreview.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/insight_paper_3.pdf
- National Police Chiefs’ Council (2019). National fraud policing strategy 2019-22. NPCC. <https://www.cityoflondon.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/city-of-london/about-us/national-policing-fraud-strategy-2019.pdf>
- Paoli, L., & Fijnaut, C. (2006). Organised crime and its control policies. *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 14/3, 307–327.

Paoli, L., & Greenfield, V.A. (2018). Harm: A substitute for crime or central to it? Boukli, A., & Kotze, J. (eds) *Zemiology: Reconnecting Crime and Social Harm*, 57-84. Palgrave Macmillan.

Penfield, T., Baker, M.J., Scoble, R., & Wykes, M.C. (2014). Assessment, evaluations, and definitions of research impact: A review. *Research Evaluation*, 23, 21–32.

Rock, P. (2017). The foundations of sociological theories of crime. Liebling, A., Maruna, S., & McAra, L. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, 21-56. Oxford University Press.

Sanders, T., Connelly, L., & King, L.J. (2016). On Our Own Terms: The Working Conditions of Internet-Based Sex Workers in the UK. *Sociological Research Online*, 21 (4), 15.

Scottish Government (2017). Serious Organised Crime in Scotland: A Summary of the Evidence. Scottish Government. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/serious-organised-crime-soc-scotland-summary-evidence/>

Sergi, A. (2013). Structure versus Activity. Policing Organized Crime in Italy and in the UK, Distance and Convergence. *Policing*, 1–10.

Sergi, A. (2016). National security vs criminal law. Perspectives, doubts and concerns on the criminalisation of organised crime in England and Wales. *European Journal of Criminal Policy and Research*, 22:713–729.

Sheptycki, J. (2003). The Governance of Organised Crime in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* 28(4).

Sheptycki, J. (2007). 'Police Ethnography in the House of Serious and Organized Crime', in A. Henry and D. Smith (eds) *Transformations of Policing*, 51–77. Ashgate.

Skidmore, M. (2020). Protecting people's pensions: Understanding and preventing scams. The Police Foundation. <https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/publication/protecting-peoples-pensions-understanding-and-preventing-scams/>

Skidmore, M., Aitkenhead, E., & Muir, R. (2022). Turning the tide against online child sexual abuse. The Police Foundation. <https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/publication/turning-the-tide-against-online-child-sexual-abuse/>

Skidmore, M., Crocker, R., Webb, S., Gill, M., Garner, S., & Graham, J. (2020a). Peeling back the layers of organised crime in local communities: Integrating data and analyses to strengthen the narrative. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*.

Skidmore, M., Garner, S., Desroches, C., & Saggi, N. (2017). The threat of exploitation in the adult sex market: A pilot study of online sex worker advertisements. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Volume 12, Issue 2, 210–218.

Skidmore, M., Goldstraw-White, J., & Gill, M. (2020b). Understanding the police response to fraud: the challenges in configuring a response to a low-priority crime on the rise. *Public Money & Management*, Volume 40, Issue 5: Fraud and financial crime in the public.

Skidmore, M., Goldstraw-White, J., & Gill, M. (2020c). Vulnerability as a driver of the police response to fraud. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 49-64.

Skidmore, M., Ramm, J., Goldstraw-White, J., Barrett, C., Barleaza, S., Muir, R., & Gill, M. (2018). More than just a number: Improving the police response to victims of fraud. The

Police Foundation. <https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/publication/more-than-just-a-number-improving-the-police-response-to-victims-of-fraud/>.

Smallbone, S. and Wortley, R. (2017) Preventing child sexual abuse online. Brown, J. (eds) *Online Risk to Children: Impact, Protection and Prevention*. NSPCC / Wiley Blackwell.

Stelfox, P. (2003). Transnational organized crime: a police perspective. *Transnational Organised Crime: Perspectives on Global Security*, P 114-126.

Tilley, N. & Hopkins, M. (2008). Organized crime and local businesses. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 443-459.

Timofeyev, Y., & Skidmore, M. (2022). Examining private sector strategies for preventing insurance fraud. In: Gill, M. (eds) *The Handbook of Security*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Tusikov, N. (2011). Measuring organised crime-related harms: exploring five policing methods. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, November 2011.

Von Lampe, K. (2016). *Organized crime: Analyzing illegal activities, criminal structures, and extra-legal governance*. Sage Publications.

Wager, N., Armitage, R., Christmann, K., Gallagher, B., Ioannou, M., Parkinson, S., Reeves, C., Rogerson, M., & Synnott, J. (2018). *Rapid evidence assessment: Quantifying the extent of online-facilitated child sexual abuse*. Report for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Walklate, S. (2015). Jock Young, Left Realism and Critical Victimology. *Critical Criminology*, 23:179–190.

Wall, D. (2001). *Crime and the internet*. Routledge.

Wall, D. (2007). Policing cybercrimes: Situating the public police in networks of security within cyberspace. *Police Practice and Research*, 8:2, 183-205.

Weitzer, R. (2014). New Directions in Research on Human Trafficking. *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 653.

Wood, H., Keatinge, T., Ditcham, K., & Janjeva, A. (2021). The silent threat: The impact of fraud on UK national security. Royal United Services Institute. <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/occasional-papers/silent-threat-impact-fraud-uk-national-security>

Yip, M., Webber, C., & Shadbolt, N. (2013). Trust among cybercriminals? Carding forums, uncertainty and implications for policing. *Policing & Society*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 516-539.

Appendix

FORM UPR16

Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information)



Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information		Student ID:	up2044129
PGRS Name:	Michael Skidmore		
Department:	Criminal Justice Studies	First Supervisor:	Professor Mark Button
Start Date: (or progression date for Prof Doc students)	23 February 2021		
Study Mode and Route:	Part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	MPhil <input type="checkbox"/>	MD <input type="checkbox"/>
	Full-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Professional Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/>

Title of Thesis:	Empirical research to contextualise serious and organised crimes and develop perspectives on effective crime control in the UK
Thesis Word Count: (excluding ancillary data)	9,951

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist: (If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)	
a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Candidate Statement:	
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)	
Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):	N/A
If you have <i>not</i> submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:	
This is a PhD by Publication - it is a composite of research completed before the PhD, no new research completed.	
Signed (PGRS):	Date: 14.02.2022
Michael Skidmore	